



# THE METEOR



**Historic Preservation Society of Santa Clara  
Harris-Lass House Museum  
Spring Edition - April 1, 2018**

## **Harris-Lass Museum Will Host Open House May 19 with Family Fun Day** *by Mary Hanel*

The Harris-Lass Historic Museum, 1889 Market Street (west of Winchester), Santa Clara, will kick off its Spring events season with a nautical and maritime history-themed Family Fun Day on Saturday, May 19th.

Festivities will run from 10 a.m. -- 3 p.m. and will include a variety of crafts and games for children, including making sailor hats, tying sailor knots, sponge painting with maritime-themed stencils, face painting, filling out a passport for a chance to fish for a prize from a treasure chest, taking photos at a booth with sea surprises, and more.

Visitors can also enjoy free house tours given on the half hour from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. House tours include the opportunity to see a special exhibit on Captain Lass's years as a ship captain and the nautical artifacts in the house. This year marks what would be the 175th birthday of Captain Lass and the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I.

The historian of the South Bay Yacht Club and South Bay Historic Restoration Foundation will have a table to provide information on Santa Clara County's maritime history, the Alviso Marina and a local Sea Scout program. Sea Scouts may make an appearance.

The sponsoring Historic Preservation Society of Santa Clara will be serving complimentary light refreshments and lemonade. The Fun Day is a free event. Refreshments are also free although donations are happily accepted. For more information, call the Museum's message line at: 1-408-249-7905 or view its web site: <http://harrislass.org>.

### **Learn About Local History and Early Pioneer Families on Popular May 24 Walking Tour of Mission City Memorial Park Cemetery**

A walking tour of Santa Clara's historic Mission City Memorial Cemetery is planned for Thursday, May 24, at 12 noon at 420 N. Winchester Blvd. Conducting the free tour will be Mary Boyle, the City Library's Local History/Genealogy librarian, and Phil Orr, cemetery operations manager.

Visitors are asked to meet at the Chapel/office area and to park nearby. "This will be a good time to learn more about your hometown history and the places of historical significance that help document the past and the lives of the people who shaped Santa Clara," said Boyle.

The original two-acre site was purchased by town trustees in 1850 and referred to as "the graveyard". By 1862, ordinances had been established for operating the cemetery. The first recorded burial, of Walter McDonald, was on September 13, 1864.

Copies of the picture book "Cemeteries of Santa Clara" by local historian Bea Lichtenstein will be available for purchase from the Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society.



*Mary Hanel photo*



*Mary Hanel photo*

## Historic Walking Stick Returned to Museum by Bob Byrd

Retired sea captain Christian Lass, a prominent resident of Santa Clara from 1895 to 1920, enjoyed sharing his beautiful dahlia gardens and displaying his collections of butterflies and seashells in the family home. He was also proud of his walking stick, often referred to as his cane. In the 1800s, canes became an aristocratic accessory for well-dressed gentlemen. The cane

was returned to the Harris-Lass Museum last fall by Ron Stevens of Santa Cruz, a great-great-grandson of the sea captain, following the death of his mother, Elizabeth "Betty" Stevens. Mrs. Stevens, the family's first-born great-granddaughter, died in 2017 at age 95.

"My mother wanted the walking stick returned to the family home following her death," said her son Ron. "It was important to her that the farmhouse and contents be saved and preserved for generations to come." Like many walking sticks from Victorian times, the polished brass knob handle is embellished with detailed scroll work and engraved with the owner's name

– *Capt. C Lass.*

"We are thrilled the cane has been returned 98 years after patriarch Capt. Lass died in 1920," said Bob Byrd, HPSSC president. "We are not sure of the details, but assume the cane was a gift to the sea captain when he retired from his shipping business in San Francisco in 1895 after he fell and injured his back on the deck of one of his 18 cargo ships."

Later that same year, the Captain, age 57, moved to Santa Clara and built a Victorian house on 38 acres near Winchester Blvd. and Newhall St. When that home collapsed in the 1906 earthquake, the family moved to 1889 Market Street – now the Harris-Lass Museum and permanent home of a well-known walking stick.

## Ten Non-Profit Groups Receive 2017 Checks from Home Tour

Checks totaling \$12,500 were awarded at the recent March 20 City Council meeting to 10 Santa Clara beneficiaries of the Historic Preservation Society's 2017 Home Tour. Co-chairs Patricia Mahan and Jeannie Mahan announced nearly 600 tickets were sold. Corporate donations, advertising revenue, and individual contributions also helped to raise the total profit for last year's holiday event. The groups who received funds were as follows:

The Harris-Lass House Museum, the Old Quad Residents Association, Santa Clara Senior Center Health & Wellness Program, Santa Clara Railroad Depot Museum, Santa Clara Fire Department History Museum, Santa Clara Preservation Month Walking Tour Brochure, Santa Clara Woman's Club Historic Pena Adobe Restoration Project, Los Fundadores Ancestral Information and Archive Center, the ULISTAC Nature Preserve Park Educational Outreach Program, and the Santa Clara City Mission Library Renovation Project.

## Time to Renew 2018 Memberships

Enclosed in this month's newsletter is a form for renewing your HPSSC membership for the fiscal year 2018 to 2019.

Want to buy "early bird" tickets for the July 12 Antiques Appraisal Show or secure a table and chairs to sell your good stuff at the summer yard sale?

You need to be a dues paying member.

## Save the Date! Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming Events

Saturday, May 19  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Open House and  
Family Fun Day**

Saturday, June 9  
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**collectibles  
Estate Sale**

Thursday, July 12  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Antiques Appraisal  
and Luncheon**

Saturday, August 18  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
**Art Show on the  
Lawn**

Saturday, Sept. 8  
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Yard Sale**

Friday, Sept. 14  
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
**Movie Night**

## And Now for the Rest of the Story ... What Happened to the Albert Harris Family?

by Mary Hanel

In August 1906, after selling his house on 1889 Market Street in Santa Clara to Captain Christian Lass, Albert Harris and his wife Ada and daughter Miriam moved to what was described as an elegant and stately house on North First Street in San Jose where they engaged in many social activities. In September 1913 though, Albert died suddenly, probably from a stroke.

Ada, whose maiden name was Jordan, remained a widow for several years but she had many friends and traveled extensively to the East Coast, to the Orient and to Europe. Her name appeared frequently in the social columns of the San Jose newspapers noting her travels and parties held in her honor. She renewed her passport in both 1917 and 1920 and a photograph exists of her in her 1917 passport application. At some point in the 1920s she took up residence when she was not traveling in the Vendome Hotel in San Jose.

Sometime in the late 1920s she married a man named Samuel G. Winch. He too was a widower whose wife passed in 1925. In the 1930 Census, Ada and



*Ada Jordan Harris*

Samuel were listed as married and living at the Vendome Hotel. But in the 1940 Census they lived in a home in San Jose.



*Miriam's 1954 Cadillac*

Samuel Winch was a prominent businessman and civic leader in San Jose from about 1909 through 1940. He had come from Colorado to San Jose about 1906. In 1909 he bought a book and stationery store on South First Street from M. M. Haas. He ran the business first by himself and then with a partner named Guy Marshall. While they were partners their store on South First Street was well-known as Winch & Marshall. Samuel passed in August 1947. Ada was again a widow but she herself passed a year later in

August 1948. Her obituary said she was a charter member of the Art History Club of San Jose.

Miriam, daughter of Albert and Ada, attended and then graduated from Stanford University in 1910. She traveled extensively for a year after her graduation. In October 1913, Miriam was married in the Harris home on North First Street to Dr. Thomas L. Blanchard, a young physician who had begun his medical practice in Campbell in 1910. Dr. Blanchard subsequently studied at clinics in Europe, set up practice in San Jose and served as President of the Santa Clara County Medical Association in 1920. In 1922 when he again returned for a short course of study in the clinics of Europe, Miriam traveled to Spain with her mother. Dr. Blanchard's medical career in Santa Clara County lasted 56 years. He passed away in 1969. Miriam lived on until 1978. Her obituary noted that she was active in the San Jose Art History Club and was a founder of the Town Club. She had no children of her own but was survived by many cousins. We know she owned a 1954 Cadillac because a car buff from Germany owns and has beautifully restored her car. He contacted the Museum in 2014 to learn more about Miriam and share his photos of the car and her Cadillac registration card.

Albert Harris, Ada Harris Winch, Samuel G. Winch, Miriam Harris Blanchard and Dr. Thomas L. Blanchard are all buried together in a Jordan family plot in Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose. Their names are all carved together on the Harris side of a joint Jordan-Harris monument.



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**Staff members**

Bob Byrd; Franklin  
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 Joan Cabral; Mary Hanel;  
 Sue Harper; Susan Kozdon.



The Harris-Lass Museum is located at 1889 Market Street in Santa Clara.

**The mailing address is:**  
 HPSSC, P.O. Box 3311,  
 Santa Clara, CA 95055.

For other information visit us at our web site at [www.harrislass.org](http://www.harrislass.org) or call 1 (408) 249-7905

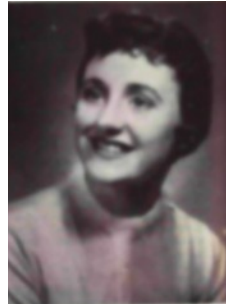
**Museum House Tours**

are open to the public  
 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on  
 Sunday, May 6  
 Saturday, May 19  
 Saturday, June 2  
 Sunday, June 17  
 Saturday, July 7  
 Sunday, July 15

**HPSSC Officers send Spring Greetings**



*Bob Byrd  
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Dear neighbors,

The fruit trees have blossomed, the orchard has been rototilled, and the roses and trees are dressed with leaves once again ... it's time for the Harris-Lass House Museum to open for our 27th season of events and activities.

It will be another busy year with our Open House May 19, Estate Sale June 9, Antiques Appraisal Luncheon July 12, Art Show August 18, Yard Sale September 8, and Movie Night September 14.

Yes, there will be fun events for all ages. Volunteers will also be busy with weekend house tours and our popular rental events for car clubs, birthday and graduation parties, bridal and baby showers, and family reunions, etc.

And speaking of our dedicated volunteers ... we could not survive without them. Volunteering can improve both your mental and physical health as you make new friends, learn new skills, and become more active in your community. We're always looking for additional volunteers. Give us a call at (408) 249-7905 and make new friends.

I hope to see you soon! – Bob Byrd, HPSSC president.

**Furniture Restoration in Museum Sitting Room Brings Memories of Lass Family Victorian Home**

The recent restoration and reupholstering of five pieces of antique furniture in the Harris-Lass House sitting room has added a warm Victorian feeling to the 1865 farm house. The settee and four chairs were originally in the Lass family's Telegraph Hill house in San Francisco in the late 1880s.

"After more than 100 years and decades of wear, it was time to refurbish the pieces," said project co-chairs Joan Cabral and Bob Byrd. "We worked with The Alameda Upholstery Shop in San Jose to maintain the authenticity of the original pieces," explained Cabral. Vintage fabric with a flower garden design, red velvet trim, and red and gold tassels and cording were used to replicate the furniture from the fashionable Victorian Era.



*Joan Cabral photo*